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Twenty-seventh progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2116 (2013), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2014 and requested me to keep it regularly informed of the situation on the ground as UNMIL continues its reconfiguration, as well as of progress towards achieving transition benchmarks and of the progressive handover of security responsibilities to national institutions. The present report provides the requested information, as well as an update on major developments since my report of 12 August 2013 (S/2013/479).

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. A dominant feature of the political environment during the period under review was the continuous public expression of dissatisfaction with national authorities by different sectors, often accompanied by threats of demonstrations. Although most such threats were unrealized or resulted in small gatherings, they were heavily covered by the media. In mid-November, motorcycle taxi drivers, unhappy with new traffic regulations, threatened to demonstrate, and university unrest persisted through December and January. In this context, on 9 October, a pro-government group mobilized a large-scale show of support, which civil servants were encouraged to attend, to greet the President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, when she returned from a trip abroad. Eleven individuals associated with a smaller anti-government rally on the same day were detained and later charged with sedition and other crimes. These developments, along with a decision by the Supreme Court to disbar the Minister for Justice for six months, contributed to a general public sense of an unsettled political environment.

3. Concerns by some political parties and civil society organizations also coalesced around the 21 August jailing of Rodney Sieh, managing editor of the newspaper *FrontPage Africa*, for non-payment of a $1.5 million libel judgement. The newspaper was also closed. The libel case had been brought against Mr. Sieh by a former government minister, who alleged that Mr. Sieh had published defamatory articles, knowing that some of the information therein was false. After Mr. Sieh

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became ill in prison and was hospitalized, the Minister for Justice ordered his release on 9 October on compassionate grounds. After the parties reached an amicable settlement, Mr. Sieh was released on 19 November. The Minister asserted that Liberian law provided the basis for her action in granting compassionate release. However, on 10 January, the Supreme Court cited the Minister for contempt in connection with the action and ordered her disbarment for six months; Mr. Sieh's lawyer was disbarred for three months for having sought his client's release on compassionate grounds. The President stated that she was seeking legal advice about the implications of the Court's decision to disbar the Minister.

4. On 16 October, the President signed the national budget for fiscal year 2013/14, totalling $582.9 million. The increase over the proposed $553 million was a result of additional revenue that the legislature claimed to have identified during its review.

5. In the midst of a revenue shortfall and upcoming senatorial elections, allocations for county-level projects became a point of contention between the legislature and the executive. On 21 January, the Minister for Finance appeared before the House of Representatives and stated that there was a $17.1 million shortfall in revenue collection and that future revenue collections might be at risk. In the light of this, he requested that representatives reconsider the allocations they had added to the budget for county-level projects. On 16 January, the House plenary requested that its leadership seek $73 million for county-level projects in the next budget. Subsequently, on 23 January, the Senate discussed a bill that would guarantee 15 per cent of the budget for county projects. The President, in her annual address to the legislature on 27 January, cautioned that rural development could be achieved only through realistic budgeting. In the meantime, structured dialogue between UNMIL leadership and the legislature continued, with a meeting on 20 January focusing on the transition of UNMIL.

6. On 10 January, the National Elections Commission announced that it was postponing its scheduled update of the voters list owing to delays in receiving allocated government funds. The process started on 29 January, about two weeks late, and will conclude on 21 March. The update is taking place in preparation for elections, to be held in October 2014, when 15 of 30 senatorial seats will be contested. In response to the delay, several parties, including the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), publicly expressed concern about the integrity of the election.

7. Although the campaign period is scheduled to begin on 12 August, much of the attention of politicians and political parties is already on the senatorial elections, which are viewed as an opportunity to gauge and consolidate support before the 2017 legislative and presidential elections. Several political parties, including CDC, launched membership drives ahead of the voter list update exercise and have conducted county tours and other activities to consolidate party structures ahead of the October polls. The lead-up to the elections has also contributed to leadership struggles within some parties, indicative of the lack of cohesiveness in the political party system.

B. National reconciliation and political reform initiatives

8. The implementation of the National Reconciliation Road Map has relied heavily on the Peacebuilding Fund, which is providing $11.2 million between October 2013 and December 2015 to support the implementation of seven projects, including peace committees, youth service programmes, women as peacemakers and conflict management and economic empowerment projects. On 19 October, the President officially launched the national "Palava Hut" programme. A national technical forum was convened in November to clarify its mandate, jurisdiction and methodology, although to date no concrete progress has been made on implementation, owing in part to major institutional frailties, including gaps in technical capacity.

9. Meanwhile, a national history project is under way, following a second conference in August 2013, and the United Nations country team is discussing possible support with the Government. On 6 February, the President launched a project to develop more inclusive national symbols. In addition, the Government is exploring South-South cooperation with Rwanda and South Africa on reconciliation initiatives. With the National Reconciliation Road Map continuing to face financial challenges, the development of a resource mobilization strategy is under way. Greater operational capacity, as well as added political determination, will be necessary for the long-term success of reconciliation efforts.

10. Efforts continued towards constitutional reform, although the slow progress will make the timelines difficult to maintain. The Constitution Review Committee is working towards completing civic education and public consultations by the end of March 2014, leading to the validation of proposed amendments at a national conference proposed for April 2014. Proposals would then be presented to the President ahead of consideration by the legislature, and a subsequent national referendum would be held no sooner than one year after legislative action.

11. The Constitution Review Committee held several large consultations with stakeholders, including political parties, traditional leaders and civil society. County-level civic education and consultations commenced in February. The possible formats for a national conference on constitutional reform are still being discussed and funding has yet to be secured. In January, with UNMIL support, the Committee and the legislature began to engage in structured discussions aimed at reaching a common understanding of the process and collaboration among stakeholders. The Committee also appointed female leaders to mobilize women's engagement in the constitutional reform process. UNMIL continued to support the deployment of technical experts to assist the Committee, while funding from the Peacebuilding Fund and the United States Agency for International Development, through a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project, supported sectoral consultations, technical assistance and preparations for county-level activities.

12. Decentralization is a critical element of plans for inclusive governance. Preparations are ongoing for the initial deconcentration of selected functions by 12 ministries and two agencies. Following consultations with stakeholders, a local government act was drafted that provides a legal basis for implementing the national policy on decentralization and local governance. The Governance Commission, with support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment

of Women (UN-Women), also completed a study on gender and decentralization in December 2013. The draft act has been submitted to the President for review and subsequent submission to the legislature. In the meantime, the Commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs have been engaged in awareness-raising campaigns on both aspects of the policy. In November, in an effort to improve financial management, the President announced the appointment of assistant superintendents for fiscal and financial affairs for 12 counties.

13. Progress was also made in establishing legislative and policy frameworks for land reform. The Land Commission completed and submitted to the President draft legislation to transform the land rights policy into law. In addition, deficiencies and duplication in land governance in Liberia will be addressed through the creation of a land agency, the exact nature of which will be elaborated in forthcoming legislation. In December, the President signed an executive order imposing a moratorium on all public land transactions and assembled a nine-member committee to vet all land deeds.

C. Security situation

14. The overall security situation remained generally stable, though fragile. Mob violence was a significant challenge, while reports of sexual violence remained high, with 15 per cent of reported incidents involving children under the age of 10. Reports of armed robbery also continued, with approximately one third of incidents involving firearms.

15. The prevalence of mob violence and vigilantism continued to demonstrate the weaknesses of and lack of public confidence in the justice institutions of Liberia. These forms of violence also continued to test the quick response capacity of security institutions. Since my last report, 37 incidents of mob violence were reported, with 9 occurring so far in 2014. The police, with limited presence and mobility, were on some occasions overwhelmed by large crowds and required intervention by UNMIL to restore order and protect civilians. In a November 2013 study, UNMIL reported a 44 per cent increase in incidents of mob violence over a five-month period in 2013 compared with the same period in 2012. The study also indicated that mobs had become more violent and volatile, prompting increased police intervention with lethal force.

16. Tensions related to concessions continued to provoke violent demonstrations. Since my last report, nine demonstrations involving workers or affected communities took place at concessions in Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Maryland and Sinoe Counties. In all cases, the mobilization of large crowds, often armed with crude weapons, required intervention by UNMIL in support of national authorities.

17. In October and November 2013, demonstrations at the University of Liberia became violent when students protested against more rigorous testing procedures and other administrative reforms. During the protests, university property was damaged, roads were blocked, drivers were harassed and vehicles were stopped, including two UNMIL vehicles, one of which sustained damage. The violence prompted university authorities to suspend all activities until 2 February. Smaller protests, most of them peaceful, were also held in Monrovia and other counties by teachers and contract workers over wages and working conditions.

18. UNMIL continued to operationalize its strategy for the protection of civilians, as mentioned in my previous report. Recognizing that the primary responsibility to protect civilians lies with the Government, UNMIL continued to reinforce national security actors in response to a variety of threats, including tensions around concessions and large-scale mob violence. UNMIL also continued to facilitate critical early warning throughout the country and engaged in contingency planning with national and United Nations country team partners in respect of potential regional security deterioration and/or refugee inflows.

D. Regional issues

19. The situation along the borders between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone remained relatively calm. Liberian authorities and UNMIL maintained regular cross-border engagement with their counterparts across the respective borders. Although electoral violence in the run-up to the September 2013 legislative elections in Guinea raised concerns of spillover, prompting contingency planning, no threats materialized.

20. As indicated in my 24 December report on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) (S/2013/761), a comprehensive cross-border security strategy for addressing security threats in the Mano River Union was developed with support from the United Nations Office for West Africa and United Nations peace operations in West Africa, including UNMIL. The strategy was subsequently endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 25 October.

21. The Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire continued to follow up on agreements reached at the June 2012 and April 2013 quadripartite meetings, which also involved UNMIL and UNOCI. The strengthened bilateral coordination and information exchange between security agencies on both sides of the border remains evident. As indicated in my aforementioned report on UNOCI, a joint council of chiefs and elders met in Liberia in October 2013, bringing together traditional chiefs, elders, civil authorities, women and youth representatives from both sides of the border, as well as Ivorian refugees living in Liberia, to discuss reconciliation, cross-border cooperation and conditions for refugee return. President Johnson-Sirleaf and President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire attended. So far, however, the Governments have not taken concrete steps to implement the agreements reached, including the organization of a second meeting in Côte d'Ivoire.

22. The Liberia National Police Emergency Response Unit and Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, along with other agencies, continued to operate along the border with Côte d'Ivoire. However, joint security operations planned for November 2013 and January 2014 with Ivorian security agencies were postponed, as indicated in my report on UNOCI, owing in part to budgetary constraints in Liberia.

23. Legal proceedings against 18 Liberians charged with mercenarism for their alleged involvement in cross-border attacks in 2011 and 2012 ended in a mistrial in October, following allegations of jury tampering. Proceedings were again suspended by the judge in December after the Liberian defendants disrupted the retrial proceedings.

24. Inter-mission cooperation between UNMIL and UNOCI continued through information-sharing, analysis and coordinated operations with national counterparts and the United Nations country teams. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations led a programme to assess the links between food insecurity and political instability. Under the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, $2.5 million has been approved under the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security for projects in border counties.

E. Humanitarian situation

25. A total of 18,373 Ivorian refugees voluntarily repatriated to Côte d'Ivoire in 2013 with assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), exceeding the UNHCR target of 16,000 and leaving a total of 52,786 Ivorian refugees in Liberia. The planned closure by the end of 2013 of the Solo refugee camp in Grand Gedeh County, which hosts 6,000 Ivorian refugees, was postponed until March owing to construction delays. UNHCR, with the support of UNMIL and the United Nations country team, worked to find durable solutions for Ivorian refugees in Liberia and hopes to resume the activities of the Tripartite Commission, comprising the two Governments and UNHCR, to facilitate further voluntary return.

26. The Government of Liberia and the United Nations, including the humanitarian country team, developed and strengthened planning, advocacy and resource mobilization strategies to address the needs of communities hosting Ivorian refugees and residual humanitarian challenges, and mobilized $3 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

F. Human rights situation

27. Notwithstanding some progress, limitations persisted in gaining access to justice and basic services, and efforts have been slow to create a protective environment for civilians. In December, the Ministry of Justice launched a five-year national human rights action plan to promote compliance with human rights standards, incorporating a national strategy for implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had been validated in September. A national strategy for fulfilling the human rights obligations of Liberia, including treaty ratification, is being validated by the Ministry of Justice.

28. In November 2013, former Supreme Court Associate Justice Gladys Johnson was nominated as Chair of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, pending Senate confirmation. The Commission continued to extend its outreach nationwide through county visits and has undertaken a prison monitoring project in cooperation with civil society partners, while also leading efforts to implement the Palava Hut programme. However, the Commission still needs to develop internal governance procedures so that it can perform its mandated role to engage on critical processes, such as constitutional reform, and establish a nationwide mechanism for handling public complaints.

29. Although the Government has continued to raise awareness on harmful traditional practices, relevant United Nations partners are commencing a review of

current initiatives to support the Government in formulating more concrete prevention and response measures.

G. Economic situation

30. Real gross domestic product growth in 2013 was estimated at 8.1 per cent, mainly due to strong mining activity, while construction and services also accelerated. Average inflation was projected at close to 7.8 per cent at the end of 2013, up from 6.8 per cent in 2012. There were challenges to budget execution, with core revenues coming in below target, while spending exceeded targets, owing in part to the absorption of teacher and health worker salaries, previously funded by donors. Capital spending fell, reflecting capacity constraints and delays in securing external financing.

31. Trade and current-account deficits are projected to have widened in 2013 as public investment scaled up. The Liberian dollar depreciated by 10 per cent in 2013, reflecting in part a large net injection of local currency into the economy. Higher intervention in the foreign exchange market by the Central Bank resulted in a decline in reserves to about 2.7 months of imports.

32. High unemployment among young people and associated socioeconomic and security risks continued to be a concern. Government efforts had minimal effect, with the Government-funded Liberia Youth Empowerment Programme employing only 3,219 young people since March 2013, falling short of its targeted 10,000 jobs.

III. Development of national security and justice capacities

A. Security transition

33. Drawing on lessons from the first phase of the military drawdown of UNMIL, joint planning with the Government for the second phase began in August 2013. The second phase will include the withdrawal of UNMIL military from an additional 3 counties by June 2014, leaving 7 of the 15 counties of Liberia without a fixed military presence. In addition, UNMIL handed over several important security responsibilities, including the protection of banks and port installations in Monrovia and the provision of cash escorts in some counties.

34. Collaboration with the Government has been maintained through the UNMIL/Government joint transition working group. However, the Government continued to face significant challenges in assuming greater security responsibilities. Deployments of security personnel have not been significantly increased, nor have the facilities handed over been sufficiently equipped. Although the Government had committed to allocating $10 million to transition activities in the 2013/14 national budget, this was reduced to $6 million. As this figure also includes $1.75 million for regional justice and security hubs, only $4.25 million has been earmarked specifically for the security transition. It has yet to be ascertained if the earmarked funds have been disbursed.

B. National security strategy and architecture

35. In September 2013, the Government, with the support of the United Nations and the Swedish embassy, organized a security sector reform retreat to identify priorities for an updated national security strategy. Recommendations included the need to professionalize the sector by appointing senior officials from within the ranks and institutionalizing increased transparency in tenure and promotion systems. Legislative reform and the importance of strengthening oversight institutions were also identified as priorities. However, the 2013/14 national budget included reduced security sector spending compared with 2012/13, presenting challenges for the further development of the sector, especially in the context of transition.

36. In September 2013, the President vetoed an amendment to the 2011 National Security Reform and Intelligence Act that would have rescinded the abolition of two security agencies, namely, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Ministry of National Security. The Government has a plan for a nationwide rollout of county security councils. Currently, such councils exist in seven counties, while district security councils exist in only two, and not all are fully functional. Both types of council are intended to serve as local coordination bodies providing early warning information to the National Security Council.

37. In September 2013, the President appointed a chair to the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms, which is undertaking a needs assessment in border areas ahead of a weapons collection programme, while promoting awareness of the Arms Trade Treaty. A draft firearms act was finalized and approved by the Minister for Justice and is awaiting the President's consideration. A basic gender training manual for security sector institutions was also developed by UN-Women.

C. National police

38. In September 2013, the Liberia National Police completed a baseline assessment, conducted with UNMIL. It provided a comprehensive assessment of police capacity, including integrity and effectiveness. It also provided a baseline with benchmarks and indicators to track progress. The findings of the assessment included progress in institutional, administrative and operational effectiveness, as well as improved police capacity to undertake some operations with reduced UNMIL support. However, underdeveloped and underperforming management and administrative capacities, a continuing reliance on external political appointments and limitations in mobility, communications and infrastructure were identified as critical gaps, compounded by continuing challenges such as an outdated legal framework, weak accountability and inconsistent budgetary support.

39. Recommendations included reviewing the organizational structure of the police, improving conditions of service, decentralizing training, management and administration, strengthening a public complaints mechanism and expediting a legal framework to address senior appointments, promotions and rank structure. Feedback from the Ministry of Justice and police leadership has been positive. A joint steering committee, comprising the police, UNMIL and UNDP, was established to prepare a new strategic plan and development framework for the police. A draft of a new legal framework for the police was finalized in August 2013 and submitted to the

Ministry of Justice, but remains stalled owing to a lack of clarity about Ministry leadership.

40. Efforts to increase the professionalism of the police continued, with 19 senior officers completing leadership and management training at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, supported by Irish Aid, part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland also supported the middle management training of 17 police officers at the same institution. The United Nations Mine Action Service trained nine instructors from the police training academy on recognition and awareness of explosive remnants of war. In December 2013, the Ministry of Justice, with support from the Ministry of Gender and Development and UN-Women, launched a basic gender training manual as part of the curriculum of the police academy. However, in-service training at the academy was suspended in September 2013 owing to budgetary constraints.

41. Current police strength is 4,573, just slightly over its strength of 4,566 at 1 August. The first special class of college-graduate police recruits graduated in December 2013. The next class, totalling 291 recruits, will graduate in February, increasing police strength to 4,864. However, basic training for new recruits at the police training academy is severely behind schedule, owing to funding shortfalls and capacity constraints, with a reported backlog of over 1,000 recruits awaiting training. Efforts continued to be made to increase female representation, which currently stands at 17.9 per cent, short of the 20 per cent target. These efforts are being conducted jointly by the Ministry of Gender and Development, UN-Women and UNMIL, and have included national outreach programmes to increase female recruitment. The Police Support Unit target of 1,000 officers was reached in November 2013 and its current strength is 1,005, including 119 women. The recruitment process for a new class of 100 recruits has been initiated and the United States of America has committed to providing funds for training, uniforms and equipment for the trainees.

42. The police and other national law enforcement agencies, along with UNMIL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, continued to support the Transnational Crime Unit. A joint operation to dismantle money-laundering networks was conducted with support from Ghana and the United Kingdom. Proposed legislation with respect to illegal drugs is before the legislature, while an initiative to combat drug trafficking, including surveillance and intelligence operations, is being conducted at Roberts International Airport. In mid-January, the Unit, in a joint operation with the Liberia Airport Authority and the Drug Enforcement Agency, arrested a foreign national attempting to smuggle 795 grams of heroin. However, greater collaboration among Liberian security agencies in intelligence-gathering, investigations, operations and prosecution is still needed.

D. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization

43. In August 2013, the President dismissed the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner for Operations (who was subsequently reinstated) and the Director of Border Operations of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization for implication in a human trafficking case. The Deputy Commissioner for Naturalization, who was appointed Commissioner of the Bureau in January 2014, has been working to restore

its integrity. An internal promotion mechanism was established and accountability measures enhanced. While funding constraints continued to be a challenge, 13 new projects were approved as part of the strategic plan of the Bureau aimed at enhancing skills and operational capabilities.

44. In November 2013, 234 new recruits completed their training, including 98 women, of which 209 were deployed to strategic border checkpoints. Plans to develop the former UNMIL camp in Foya, Lofa County, as a training centre also progressed, with the Ministry of Justice committing funds for infrastructure development and support provided by UNMIL and UNDP. A new training centre would help to relieve demands on the police academy and complement efforts to decentralize its services.

45. A national migration policy was developed in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization to enhance the national migration policy framework and migration management capacities of the Government.

E. Judicial, legal and corrections institutions

46. The judiciary has developed a framework for the restructuring of the Office of the Court Administrator, established a Court Inspectorate Unit and broadened oversight bodies of the judiciary and the legal profession to include civil society. The Ministry of Justice also initiated the recruitment and training of 25 lawyers to serve as prosecutors at magisterial courts in place of non-lawyer practitioners and has, with the support of the World Bank, begun nationwide consultations on the development of a national alternative dispute resolution policy that will provide a framework for addressing some civil disputes and minor criminal matters.

47. Efforts to improve justice and security sector service delivery continued through the justice and security hubs initiative. Construction has been completed of the court at the first hub, in Gbarnga, Bong County, although the judiciary has not yet held its inauguration. Personnel are expected to be deployed in February at the second and third hubs, to be located in the south-east, including prosecutors, public defenders, human rights monitors and sexual- and gender-based violence personnel. The Peacebuilding Fund continued to support the implementation of the hubs, and the Government is also contributing. A workshop was held on 4 and 5 February 2014 to reflect on lessons learned from the operationalization of the first hub. Final outcomes will guide the continued development of future hubs once funding has been mobilized.

48. As mentioned in paragraph 14 above, high rates of rape and other forms of sexual violence continue, with most reported cases involving victims under the age of 18. While the Government/United Nations joint programme on sexual- and gender-based violence is increasing its focus on prevention, efforts continue to improve response to sexual offences, including the launch in August 2013 of a pilot project to enhance forensics capacity. The project, a joint initiative by the Ministries of Health and Justice, included the training of police officers, nurses and laboratory technicians, and the creation of a database to track investigations. The Ministry of Gender and Development, with United Nations support, is training traditional leaders on preventing gender-based violence.

49. Pre-trial detention dropped to 74 per cent from an average of 80 per cent. Through the magisterial sitting programme, 908 detainees were released from Monrovia Central Prison, up from 515 in the previous reporting period. UNMIL is also supporting the judiciary and the Ministry of Justice to prioritize implementation of the jury law and legislation to expand the jurisdiction of magistrate's courts, which would help to reduce the backlog of cases.

50. Insecurity at corrections facilities continued, with 10 prison escapes during the reporting period and 7 disturbances by prisoners protesting prolonged pretrial detention and poor food quality. Searches of facilities have increased and post-incident training has been introduced. Security was affected by delays in the payment of corrections officers' salaries and the delivery of food supplements. UNMIL continued to provide security for the two largest prisons, in Monrovia and Zwedru.

51. The Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation comprised 259 corrections officers, including 53 women. While it had completed the recruitment of 70 new corrections officers, including 18 women, their training was delayed owing to budgetary constraints. Recruitment and training are critical for the Bureau as it prepares for the transition of UNMIL, including the development of sufficient ownership and capacity to assume security and management responsibilities.

52. Implementation of the 10-year national health policy, which incorporates prison health services, has improved prisoner health care. Visits by county health teams to corrections facilities continue and the Ministry of Health has deployed nurses to manage prison clinics.

F. Armed forces

53. On 4 February, the President announced the nomination of a Liberian national to become Chief of Staff of the armed forces of Liberia. If confirmed by the Senate, the nominee will take over from the incumbent from Nigeria, placing the armed forces under full Liberian command. While the armed forces are now fully operational, the institution still faces significant financial, operational and logistical challenges. It does not control its own budget, as the Ministry of Defence is required to request specific funding for its training, equipment and operations. A recent recruitment campaign yielded 140 vetted recruits, who began training in December 2013. The armed forces comprised 1,900 soldiers as at 5 February, with plans to reach 2,200 by 2015. The draft national defence strategy and code of military discipline have, however, yet to be signed by the Minister for Defence.

54. In November 2013, the United Nations Mine Action Service, in coordination with the Ministry of Defence, began a programme to train army engineers and establish centralized explosive ordnance disposal response teams. By December 2013, the armed forces had 16 engineers trained to level 2 certification. UNMIL also provided a course in intelligence analysis and reporting for army personnel, while supporting training to develop heavy road construction capability within the engineering company.

55. In January, Liberia expressed its intention to enhance its current contribution of a platoon to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, by adding an additional company.

56. The coast guard, which is now considered operationally independent, comprises 51 active personnel, with 20 to 30 additional recruits expected to become operational within six months. It continues to patrol intercoastal waterways, having increased its patrol range to 150 miles from port, up from 75 miles in 2012.

IV. Extension of State authority throughout the country

A. State authority

57. Gradual progress continued in the consolidation of State authority throughout the country. The absence of fully functional State institutions and limited infrastructure and communications hampered service delivery in rural and border regions, particularly during the rainy season. The Government committed to improving transport and energy infrastructure. On 25 January, the President led a ceremony to break ground for the Mount Coffee hydroelectric plant, a major source of electricity until it was damaged during the conflict. It is expected to begin supplying electricity in December 2015. The Government also reached an agreement with the African Development Bank to finance a new paved road along the border between Maryland and River Gee Counties.

58. Decentralization is one government strategy for extending State authority, as indicated in paragraph 12, above. However, governance at the local level continued to face challenges, including the absence of clear county development agendas, weak coordination, high levels of absenteeism, continuous misapplication of and disputes over county and social development funds, and weak logistical support. On 16 December, the Ministry of Internal Affairs imposed a temporary freeze on new transfers and disbursements from county and social development funds, pending a review to ensure alignment with county development agendas. While the freeze will affect the 2013/14 budget, which devolves accounting powers to county councils, the counties will continue to operate with funds already transferred from the Ministry of Finance.

B. Governance

59. Some measures were taken to improve transparency and accountability, although follow-through on identified cases of possible corruption or maladministration remained weak. In October 2013, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission released its second report on the verification of assets of presidential appointees. Of the 77 officials audited, 25 were found to have made truthful declarations, 22 were judged uncooperative and 30 were found to have misrepresented their assets or did not complete the exercise. However, as with the first report, the sanctions recommended by the Commission against uncooperative senior officials have not been addressed and the next steps are unclear. The President appointed a new Chair for the Commission in November 2013. The General Auditing Commission completed audits of county development funds in 10 counties, although the reports have yet to be completed.

60. From August to December 2013, the legislature held public hearings with five State institutions on reports submitted in 2010 or earlier by the General Auditing Commission, out of a total of 125 audits received. On 18 September, the President

nominated a new Auditor General to replace the former office holder, who was dismissed for conflict of interest on 8 July. The nomination is still awaiting Senate confirmation.

C. Natural resources

61. Challenges persisted in the management of natural resources, including in managing the relationship between concessionaires and affected communities. In November 2013, the Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative endorsed a post award process audit report on concessions, contracts, licences and other rights awarded by the Government from mid-July 2009 to the end of December 2011. The audit concluded that, out of 68 contracts, only 2 were fully compliant with regulatory frameworks. The Initiative also fined and warned 26 extractive companies and 2 government entities for non-compliance with the July 2010 to June 2011 fourth reconciliation report. In mid-January, the Initiative publicly named 28 companies for failing to submit information on payments to the Government in time for its fifth reconciliation report, covering July 2011 to June 2012. The proposed Government allocation to the Initiative under the 2013/14 national budget has been reduced by 22 per cent from 2012/13. Meanwhile, the Peacebuilding Commission has engaged with international financial institutions to strengthen support for natural resource management.

62. By 2 February, the Forestry Development Authority had revoked 29 private use permits that were non-compliant with applicable regulations, while a further 34 were under review. However, it is not clear that the revocation of those permits ended non-compliant logging operations. The moratorium on new permits remains in place, while other licensing modalities, such as timber sale contracts and forest management contracts, operated normally. Underfunding and the dismissal of technical staff for alleged misconduct continued to hamper the management by the Authority of the sector. On 2 January, the President nominated new board members, including civil society and business sector representatives. A special independent investigative body had recommended the dissolution of the previous board for not providing sufficient oversight. On 1 November 2013, the President signed a voluntary partnership agreement regulating the export of timber to the European Union.

63. From 4 November to 10 December, the House of Representatives conducted nationwide public consultations on a draft petroleum act and draft act on the National Oil Company of Liberia, which would provide a legal framework for petroleum exploration, development and production. During legislative hearings and consultations, recommendations were made with a view to ensuring transparency in the awarding of oil block contracts, establishing mechanisms to prevent revenue leakages and putting in place environmental safeguards.

64. A new mining act covering all types of mining was drafted following consultations with civil society and the private sector and a review of new mining policies. The draft act, which would cover all mining activities, is expected to guarantee a fair share of benefits for affected communities, safeguard the environment and community livelihoods and provide a conducive investment environment. It could also help to mitigate clashes connected to illegal mining, as occurred in January in Grand Kru County.

65. In 2013, the Government reported exports of nearly 50,000 carats of rough diamonds, valued at $17.23 million and yielding about $500,000 in royalties. Liberia's compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme remained a challenge, owing to technical and budgetary constraints, and there remained a need for a comprehensive survey and database of artisanal mining locations to improve oversight and regulation.

V. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

66. While "Delivering as one", the United Nations undertook the first year of "One programme" implementation that will continue until 2017. The programme is aligned with the Government agenda for transformation and has four pillars: peace, security and rule of law; sustainable economic transformation; human development; and inclusive governance and public institutions. UNMIL and the United Nations country team implemented integrated annual workplans for the four programme pillars to strengthen joint programming and delivery of "One programme" results, while UN-Women is leading the development of a "One gender framework" for gender equality and women's empowerment.

B. Public information

67. UNMIL provided support to the Constitution Review Committee, including through UNMIL radio programmes and mass production of the text of the current Constitution. In January 2014, the Ministry of Justice and UNMIL launched a joint campaign to address mob violence, which will be rolled out in all counties throughout 2014. UNMIL also continued to broadcast programmes in French on security, development and peace initiatives for the benefit of Ivorian refugees in Liberia.

C. Gender

68. National focus on strengthening the protection of the rights of women and girls continued to expand in the face of the continually high incidence of rape. The Government conducted validation exercises to review draft domestic violence legislation and prepared a draft periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In December 2013, the President launched the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence" campaign, for which UNMIL supported public information efforts.

D. HIV/AIDS

69. UNMIL provided advanced training of trainers for 20 officers, including 8 women, from various Liberian security agencies, who had previously been trained to conduct HIV sensitization, in line with Security Council resolution 1983 (2011). It also provided HIV/AIDS awareness training to 3,182 peacekeepers, while 4,511 peacekeepers were tested voluntarily.

E. Conduct and discipline

70. Outreach was conducted to community and religious leaders through community radio stations to engage young people in discussions on the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and to raise awareness about reporting misconduct. Between 1 August 2013 and 2 February 2014, four allegations of serious misconduct were reported, including three allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

F. Security and safety of United Nations personnel

71. United Nations personnel continued to face a number of threats, including mob violence, criminal activity, traffic accidents and infectious disease. A serious incident took place on 27 December, when a group of national staff forcibly took over the entrance to the UNMIL logistics base and staged a demonstration. The police, together with UNMIL formed police unit personnel, intervened to restore order. An investigation is ongoing.

72. During the reporting period, one international staff member was the victim of an assault causing serious injury, while an additional 30 were victims of non-weapons-related crimes, including burglary and assault. There were three incidents of arrest and detention of United Nations national staff recorded. Three national staff members and three military personnel died as a result of illness during the period under review.

VI. Deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

A. Military component

73. As at 2 February, UNMIL military strength stood at 5,869 personnel, including 203 women, against an authorized strength of 5,915. The military component includes a force headquarters in Monrovia, four infantry battalions deployed in two sectors, a battalion-sized quick reaction force based in Monrovia, with two forward operating bases, and enablers.

74. Pursuant to resolution 2116 (2013), the UNMIL force began in February to execute the second phase of a three-phase drawdown, which will include repatriating a battalion (750 troops) and the two sector headquarters of the force (119 personnel). In November 2013, the military aviation unit repatriated 20 personnel and will repatriate two MI-8 helicopters in February. By June 2014, the UNMIL force will no longer have a fixed presence in Bomi, Gbarpolu or Grand Cape Mount Counties, in addition to the four counties vacated in the first phase. Following completion of the second phase in July 2014, the UNMIL force will comprise two battalions deployed along the border with Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, one battalion in Monrovia, a quick reaction force, with forward deployed companies, and enablers.

75. UNOCI and UNMIL military components continued their mutual support through inter-mission cooperation arrangements. As indicated in previous reports on UNOCI, planning continued in order to develop options for the establishment,

within its authorized military strength, of a quick reaction force configured and equipped to respond to incidents in Côte d'Ivoire, while also able to provide reinforcement in the event of a serious deterioration of security in Liberia as UNMIL continues to draw down.

B. Police component

76. As at 2 February, UNMIL police strength stood at 1,612 personnel, including 209 women, out of an authorized strength of 1,795 personnel, comprising 472 police advisers, 26 immigration advisers, 1,265 personnel in 10 formed police units and 32 corrections officers. Two of the three additional formed police units authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 2066 (2012) have been deployed, including one that arrived in October 2013, with the final unit scheduled to deploy in May 2014. Three police units are deployed in Monrovia, and one each deployed in the cities of Buchanan, Gbarnga, Tubmanburg, Voinjama and Zwedru, though the Buchanan unit was temporarily deployed to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in January.

C. Civilian component

77. As at 5 February, 1,518 civilian personnel, including United Nations Volunteers, were serving in the Mission, out of a budgeted total of 1,677. In total, 24.37 per cent of the civilian personnel were women, including 24.84 per cent of the 467 substantive staff and 24.17 per cent of the 1,051 administrative staff.

VII. Observations

78. In August 2013, Liberia celebrated the tenth anniversary of the signing of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, a reminder of steady progress towards consolidating peace, security and democratic governance. Addressing the General Assembly in September, the President underlined that, in the past 10 years, Liberia had restored its pride and allowed itself to rejoin the global community as a "respectable and responsible partner". Its progress in consolidating democratic governance, economic recovery and institutional reform has been remarkable. However, as the President observed in remarks commemorating a decade of peace, its journey has not been easy and is not over. Further consolidation will require focused Liberian commitment and resources, as well as continued international engagement.

79. The continued success of the security transition will require ever stronger political and financial commitment, in particular to strengthening and professionalizing the police. The Ministry of Justice and police leadership are charting a way towards renewed police strategic planning and the design of development frameworks, to be drawn from the conclusions of the police baseline assessment. Greater efforts will be needed to reach and sustain the stronger operational and administrative capacities of other security agencies. Justice and corrections institutions also require more attention, and efforts to decentralize services need to be expedited, including through the hubs.

80. I am encouraged by the continued joint planning between UNMIL and the Government of Liberia for the second phase of the mission's military drawdown, which has proceeded in a constructive manner. The four counties that no longer have a permanent UNMIL military presence have remained peaceful, in some cases for over a year, which is a positive indication. However, as UNMIL continues its reconfiguration and the military vacates an additional three counties by May 2014, it will be important that the Government clarify the budget allocations for transition activities and that funds are disbursed promptly to enable the required national security scale-up.

81. Important issues are at stake in the process of constitutional review, including the extent of executive power, the management of natural resources and community participation in policymaking. The closer engagement initiated by the legislature and the Constitution Review Committee is particularly important, given the need for legislative approval of proposed amendments before they go to referendum. In that regard, I am encouraged that the Committee has engaged a wide spectrum of society, including the media, traditional leaders and civil society organizations. The Committee is facing ambitious timelines for public consultations and its success will require continued Government commitment to the process, as well as financial support from national and international partners. The United Nations will continue to support this important process.

82. I remain concerned at the limited progress in taking forward national reconciliation and major political reform processes. There are serious questions about whether the modest momentum so far could have been achieved without the substantial engagement of the international community, which has implications for national ownership and sustainability.

83. It has been almost five years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report, containing important recommendations reflecting the shared aspirations of the Liberian people. A number of those recommendations have been incorporated into the National Reconciliation Road Map, including the Palava Hut programme. I welcome efforts to establish modalities for the programme, but stress the importance of strengthening the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, which is charged with its implementation. Building social cohesion will also require progress in developing a shared history and agreeing on national symbols that honour all Liberians. I welcome Government initiatives in this regard. It is important to continue to track progress in the reconciliation process. It is therefore regrettable that three years have passed since the last progress report was submitted to the legislature on implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

84. Senatorial elections scheduled for October are already generating considerable interest from political stakeholders and the public. I welcome the efforts being made by the National Elections Commission to prepare for those elections in a manner that will help to make them inclusive, fair, transparent and credible, and would urge the Government to make funds available for electoral processes in a timely manner.

85. The forthcoming elections will be an important exercise in publicly holding elected officials accountable and strengthening an inclusive democratic process. In connection with maintaining an environment in which all issues can be openly debated, many sectors of the public have raised concerns that some Liberian laws are outdated remnants of past oppressive regimes. This includes the application of

sedition laws against anti-government groups and laws of criminal and civil libel that allow seemingly excessive damage amounts to be awarded. Reforming laws that allow imprisonment for debt would also be consistent with the commitments of the Government under the Table Mountain Declaration of July 2012. I welcome the President's statement in her speech of 27 January recalling the signing by the Government of the Declaration and recognizing its call to decriminalize freedom of expression.

86. Equitable distribution of benefits from the rich natural resources of Liberia remains a significant element in consolidating peace and social cohesion. I am pleased that steps have been taken to improve natural resources management, including the revocation of some private use permits and the voluntary partnership agreement on timber exports to the European Union. The coming petroleum and mining legislation offers further opportunities to strengthen the management, transparency and responsible exploitation of resources.

87. In the coming months, the legislature expects to receive draft laws on land reform and decentralization. I welcome reforms that will give citizens more input into decisions affecting their daily lives, and that can contribute to addressing long-standing grievances and underlying causes of conflict.

88. More can be done to improve governance, accountability and oversight, particularly in the follow-up to allegations of corruption. I welcome the report of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission on the verification of assets of presidential appointees, which has enhanced transparency, though there has been limited accountability in the absence of sanctions for non-compliance.

89. Notwithstanding some progress, I remain concerned about the human rights situation in Liberia, particularly with respect to sexual- and gender-based violence, especially against children. This is further compounded by a weak national human rights protection system. I welcome the anti-rape campaign launched by the President and underscore the importance of efforts to address impunity and strengthen the rule of law.

90. The porous borders of Liberia put the country at serious risk from transnational organized crime. The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, which is undergoing an important institutional reform process, has a critical role to play in mitigating that threat, as does the Transnational Crime Unit and the Drug Enforcement Agency. The United Nations will continue to work closely with its national partners in building capacity to address cross-border threats.

91. I remain deeply troubled by delays in investigating the killing in June 2012 of seven United Nations peacekeepers across the border in Côte d'Ivoire, and wish to reiterate the responsibility of the Governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice in accordance with due process and international human rights standards.

92. I welcome improvements over the past year along the border with Côte d'Ivoire, with the active cooperation of the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including within the framework of the Mano River Union and ECOWAS, and with the support of UNMIL and UNOCI and the two United Nations country teams. The voluntary return of over 18,000 Ivorians to Côte d'Ivoire is also a welcome development. I remain concerned, however, about persistent and latent threats to stability on both sides of the border. These issues should be addressed

holistically so that they do not trigger deterioration of the security situation. I encourage the Government to continue its cooperation and welcome the elaboration of the Mano River Union cross-border security strategy.

93. Every precaution must be taken to prevent any reversal of the hard-won gains made by peace operations in West Africa over the past decade. Careful and prudent planning is required to keep our missions adequately equipped to fulfil their mandated tasks. In my next report, I intend to provide recommendations on the appropriateness of proceeding to the final stage of the UNMIL military drawdown to bring it to its residual military strength, which will remain until the withdrawal of the Mission. Those recommendations will be based on the security situation and a strategic review of the core political and security tasks of the Mission, to be conducted in February.

94. In conclusion, I wish to thank my Special Representative for Liberia, Karin Landgren, as well as all United Nations personnel, for their dedication towards sustaining peace and stability in Liberia. I would also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, the African Union, ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, other regional and subregional organizations, multilateral and bilateral development partners, the Peacebuilding Commission, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and Liberian and international civil society organizations for their commitment and contributions to peace and development in Liberia.

Annex I

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and police strength as at 31 January 2014

	Military component					
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Formed police units*	*Police*
Argentina	0	0	0	0		7
Bangladesh	13	7	509	529		15
Benin	2	1	0	3		0
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2	1	0	3		0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	0		9
Brazil	2	2	0	4		0
Bulgaria	2	0	0	2		0
China	2	6	558	566	140	18
Croatia	0	2	0	2		0
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0		0
Denmark	3	2	0	5		0
Ecuador	2	1	0	3		0
Egypt	7	0	0	7		5
El Salvador	2	0	0	2		3
Ethiopia	9	4	0	13		0
Fiji	0	0	0	0		31
Finland	1	3	0	4		0
France	0	1	0	1		0
Gambia	2	0	0	2		19
Germany	0	0	0	0		5
Ghana	9	7	700	716		27
India	0	0	0	0	242	6
Indonesia	1	0	0	1		0
Jamaica	0	0	0	0		0
Jordan	4	5	115	124	240	9
Kenya	0	2	0	2		25
Kyrgyzstan	2	0	0	2		3
Lithuania	0	0	0	0		1
Malaysia	6	0	0	6		0
Mali	0	0	0	0		0
Mongolia	0	0	0	0		0
Montenegro	2	0	0	2		0
Namibia	1	3	0	4		4
Nepal	2	3	15	20	260*	16

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Niger	2	0	0	2		0
Nigeria	14	9	1 460	1 482	120	16
Norway	0	0	0	0		12
Pakistan	9	9	1 980	1 998		10
Paraguay	2	1	0	3		0
Peru	2	2	0	4		0
Philippines	1	1	115	118		33
Poland	1	0	0	1		3
Republic of Korea	1	1	0	2		0
Republic of Moldova	2	0	0	2		0
Romania	2	0	0	2		0
Russian Federation	3	0	0	3		11
Rwanda	0	0	0	0		10
Samoa	0	0	0	0		0
Senegal	0	2	0	3		0
Serbia	4	0	0	4		6
Sri Lanka	0	0	0	0		15
Sweden	0	0	0	0		16
Switzerland	0	0	0	0		3
Thailand	0	0	0	0		2
Togo	2	1	0	3		0
Turkey	0	0	0	0		20
Uganda	0	0	0	0		14
Ukraine	2	2	236	240		14
United States of America	4	5	0	9		13
Uruguay	0	0	0	0		5
Yemen	0	1	0	1		7
Zambia	3	0	0	3		16
Zimbabwe	2	0	0	2		31
Total	**132**	**83**	**5 688**	**5 876**	**1 002***	**458**

* On 31 January 2014, a Nepalese formed police unit comprising 120 police personnel was temporarily redeployed to South Sudan to reinforce the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

Annex II

United Nations Mission in Liberia: deployment as at February 2014